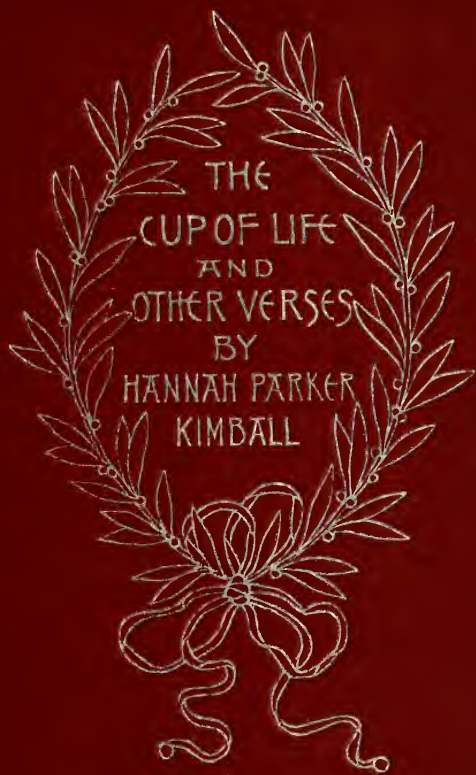


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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The Cup of Life, etc.

THE CUP OF LIFE

AND

OTHER VERSES

BY

HANNAH PARKER ✓ KIMBALL
n

BOSTON

J. G. CUPPLES COMPANY

BOYLSTON STREET

1892

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Life.

*I cannot give but that my soul doth hold:
Yet glow-worms light their lamps; though stars
do shine,
They yet may glow and not be over-bold:
So light thy tiny lamp, poor soul of mine.*

*A little water, in a simple leaf
Folded cup-like, is good in desert sand
Of common heart-break and of common grief:
Hold such a cup, my soul, within thy hand.*

*Dewdrops but few will feed the sweet wild-rose
Beside life's dusty road: could'st thou feed one
That shall give hope to some bowed heart that goes
Upon that road, my soul, thy task were done.*

THE CUP OF LIFE.

The cup of life was offered me :
An angel of great majesty
Held the huge chalice steadily ;

And said : "'Tis given thee to drink,
O mortal, from the chalice brink,
And in its depths thy soul to sink ;

Or else 'tis given thee to stand
And marvel at its carvings grand,
And barely touch it with thy hand.

Wilt drink or not? 'Tis bitter-sweet,
The draught, for gall and honey meet
And for the mastery compete."

Calm was the voice ; but as I gazed,
The angel's glorious eyes were raised,
And there a thousand voices blazed.

And sweet those voices in mine ear,
As of angelic choirs near ;
And, though my flesh did faint and fear,

My spirit yearned forth for the draught.
For joy the angel's visage laughed,
As my lips touched the cup and quaffed.

AN ORACLE.

Trembling weakly beneath the burden of worthily
living,
Came to the angel of Fate a struggling soul,
where, sphinx-like,
Solemn, the angel sat, regarding the past and the
future.

Wearily murmured the soul: "Dost see my
burden, O angel?
Bowed 'neath the weight of despair, behold how
I stagger and stumble;
How shall I lighten my load?"—"By love," the
angel made answer.

"Loving is all my pain," the soul sighed out; "'tis
the anguish,
Sorrow of others I bear. And what shall I add to
this living
To lighten so grievous a load?"—"More love,"
the angel made answer.

THE OUTSIDE SKY.

Shall I live in piles of masonry ?
Shall I sit me down in my palace of sense,
And cognizance take, and mastery,
Of every wonder brought from hence,
From hither and yon, by my senses fine,
And all heaped up in this palace of mine ?

For, O, the palace is fair to see,
Carven with figures gay is the wall,
And hung with storied tapestry ;
And I could be happy here withal,
But that through the pierced windows high
I can just catch a glimpse of the outside sky.

TRUTH'S GARB.

To live this life and still behind the same
To see some strong-browed truth stand sentinel,
Life's meanest action still to weigh and tell,
With ready gesture to approve or blame, —
This is the life of saints. What matter name,
Trapping and garment? 'Tis enough, 'tis well
That this and this are true. To some befel
A birth in the swart East. Mohammed's fame,
Opening their soul's wide windows to the East,
Let these declare. For some let Buddha brood
Beneath his mystic tree; and let some deem
The great Confucius blessed; while some still feast
Their souls on Christ, that strong and mighty
food;
'Tis not Truth's garb from which her light doth
stream.

LIFE'S BOUNDARIES.

It is enough, in sooth, that grass is green,
That skies are blue, that rivers pulse along
In placid peace, that great, white clouds are seen
Piled up in Heaven, that clear, melodious song
Thrills from birds' throats, that lofty hills invite
Our souls up, that the sea and shore combine
In perfect beauty, that the lovely light
Of human eyes is with us. Then resign
Thyself, my soul, to these life's boundaries.
Fain wouldst thou lose thyself? How shall it
be? —

First let it be in quivering hearts of trees,
Then in the dreaming mountains and blue sea;
Perchance when thou hast learned these well to
scan,
Last, thou shalt lose thee in the soul of man.

FATE'S OCEAN.

Fate's Ocean lashes the shores of life.
Men are the pebbles raked to and fro
On the sounding beach ;
Different is each ;
Some are dull and some aglow,
With tiny veins of color rife ;
Some are smooth and rough are some ;
Some go quickly and some go slow ;
But all must stir as the great waves come ;
To and fro, as the great waves go ; —
To and fro.

LIFE COMES TO SOME.

Life comes to some with aspect bright,
Her hair ablaze
With jewels' rays ;
And in her cincture gleaming jets of light.

To some with halting step and slow,
With tangled hair,
And eyes astare
For what is not, she comes, —and will not go.

A COMMON MIRACLE.

Sometimes must we lie still, too spent to weep,
Longing for rest as deserts long for rain ;
Wondering what spirit stirs the tired brain,
Why the poor heart should weary vigil keep ;
Denied the peaceful, pleasant touch of sleep
On our pale eyelids ; murmuring : “ Life is pain ;
O for that rest that does not wake again ! ” —
Then comes a sound of rushing through the air,
And the baked sands drink up the plashing rain ;
Sleep soaks our souls in answer to our prayer ;
And, marvelous ! — the next day life is plain,
Easy and simple, profitable and fair.

VICISSITUDES.

She sleeps, her fair cheek pillowed on some joy,
Some satisfaction pure, without alloy.

What shall awake her ? whispered love so low
That the sweet words seem melting, soft and slow ?

Nay ! but the blood-red torch, the clangorous strife
Of armed men round her.— Thus it is with life.

THE FLIGHT OF LIFE.

Down the great steeps of life vertiginous
We scurry, you and I. Whither away,
—The while the sky reels backward over us,
In this hot haste that bates not night or day?
To distances we cannot dream or know,
In impotence supreme and vast we go.

THE SPOTLESS DAY.

It is so short a space twixt day and night !
Can ye not keep it spotless, heart and brain ?
Will ye not league to keep the scutcheon bright
Of these few hours ? Then, without one stain,
Bearing the blazon of a heavenly light,
Thou shalt be hung aloft, O perfect day,
In my dark halls of time,—and to my sight
Shalt gleam a star, to show me what I may.

LIFE'S DEMAND.

Life stood before me in the days long past,
Both hands outstretched, and slowly I unclasped
A jewel from my neck and gave it her ;
Then gave her others, all without demur ;
And still those outstretched hands that asked the
whole.

“O life, O life, is this not ample? See,
My days, my hopes, my joys I give to thee ;
I cannot give myself,” I learned to say.
Down dropped her arms, frowning she turned away,
And I go desolate, a baffled soul.

THE GREAT VICTORY.

Is it so sweet to feel a friendship near?
To know a hovering presence in the place,
And through shut eyes be conscious of a face
With gaze intense and full of sleepless cheer,
Which says: "I love thee wholly. I am here?"—
Is this so sweet? Is this a heaven of grace
That doth repay us for the weary race?
For all life's tumult loud and conflict drear?
—Ay, this is sweet. — But there's a heaven higher,
A soul shall know that takes its lonely stand
In an embattled place, and sees the land
Naked around it, black, and scarred by fire;
Then learns, in very loneliness, to aspire
To God, — and finds life's victory in its hand.

CONSUMMATION IN THE YEARS.

Mildly the old year sighs itself away,
And in the New Year there is only God.
The seed that in my soul's first conscious day
Was sown, has burst in blossom from the sod,
And with its peachy petals fills all space,
And makes of earth a blooming garden-place
Of joy and sweetness. Let the soul conclude
As it begins, from dawning year to year,
And once the time shall come, when, seeing clear,
It finds life perfect, all compact of good.
This year brings light, and light beatitude.
Welcome God's light in His light-freighted year !

RETROSPECT.

Upon a yellow, arid strip of sand
I think I sat once, in some other life,
Still as a stone, my head upon my hand,
And saw the sapphire sea, without a strife
Of waves, stir gently, and like silver burn
Beneath the heavens' beaming, glorious gaze.
All was so breathless that a soul might learn
Secrets of living and of spirit's ways.
And that great waste of waters whispered thus,
—Ay, whispered me, that sat in calmness
drowned —
“We live, we move, we stir for God in us.”
And now, in this life, far below the sound
Of clamorous voices seeking mastery,
I hear the whisper of that sapphire sea.



Love.

*

*I would not have a love wild over-much,
But love with power to do or to refrain;
Love loving Love so well it would not stain
Love's fair white pinions with one brutal touch.*

ASPIRATION.

Give me thy hand, beloved ; dost thou see
Yonder far hills against the western sky ?
Thither our path. What though before us lie
Hillock and dale ?—woods dark with mystery
Of dim, dank pool and strangely twisted tree ?
The strong have trod this path : they knew not
why,
Perchance, but saw, as we, those hills on high
Loom up in grand and purple majesty.
And shall we stay upon this pleasant plain,
Where shines the sun and sing the birds above ?
Where humming bees keep up a soft refrain,
Seeming to murmur ecstasy and love ?
We cannot stay. O, love, thy hand ! To gain
Those far, dim heights let it be said we strove.

TOO LATE.

If you had lived, I would have come one day,
Perchance through many a rough and thorny way,
Come, just my head upon your breast to lay,
To look into your eyes ; — with earnest brow

I would have said : —

“I wronged you once, that day, now so long past,
You looked for strength that should stand firm
and fast,

I gave you weakness ; but am come at last
With somewhat better ; ” — but, alas ! not now,
Since you are dead.

THE LESSER NATURE TO THE
GREATER.

When in our hands we hold life's bitter wage,
Into that other world have gone at last,
How will it be, love? Wilt thou backward cast
A longing look at all life's heat and rage? —
Nay, for thy wondering eyes shall read a page
They never saw before. Dear love, the past
Holds nothing like it. Thou shalt see, aghast,
Lines on my soul, undreamed of thee, how sage
Soe'er thou still hast been.—But read, ah, read,
There too the torment and the bitter strife,
As I strove up, learned secret tears to bleed
And thorns to bear, with endless longing rife
To reach thy stature. Surely this must plead.
Thou wilt not turn from me in that new life?

THE HOLY OF HOLIES.

Thou hast wandered far and wide
In the kingdom of my heart,
Looked about on every side,
Entered into every part.
Now, before one little door
Sittest down, wouldst fain implore,
“ Let me in ! Give me this key.
I would every chamber see.” —
Dwindled seems thy vast domain ?
Shrunk to nothing, at the thought
Of this little secret port ? —
Let thee in ? — Nay, love, in vain.
Into this one chamber no
Human foot shall ever go.

ONE WAY OF TRUSTING.

Not trust you, love? Nay, 'tis not true.
As sailors trust the glancing sea
From day to day, so I trust you.
They know how smooth the sea can be ;
And well they know 'twill rage, pursue,
When winds do blow ;—yet forth they thrust
Their skiffs, as in security.
They trust it, love, because they must.

MY LADY.

My lady is not fair, but a clear light
Shines in her eyes from morning until night.

My lady is not learned, but she knows
The way to every heart, — straight there she goes.

Though neither fair nor learned, she is one
To love and love, and never to have done.

HEART TO HEART.

Dearest, we are heart to heart
And can hear the mingled beat.
Surely, dear, when hearts thus meet
They no longer dwell apart.

Listen to the rhythmic tune.
There ! those rapid notes were true.
What ! I start away anew,
And thy beat comes in too soon ?

Thou wouldst have the perfect time ?
Dearest, here it cannot be.
Let my heart beat unto thee
As it must. Those throbs that chime
With thine own, are they but few ? —
Dear, my heart is lonely too.

THE MIND IS A BIRD.

O, the mind is a bird, with a choice of flight.
It can fly to the top of the tree,
Singing "Love, Love, Love," all day and all night,
Merrily, airily,
Faithfully, cheerily.
Fly high, Mind! — Or wilt thou fly low?
Wilt thou go,
Draggingly, creepingly,
Slowly and feebly,
Through the mud and the mire,
Through the world's sharp desire,
And the passion of sense?
O Mind, get thee hence.
Having seen, leave the sight.
Get thee up! Get thee higher!
Rise, Mind! Try a flight!
Seek the sweet, green tops of the trees,
Where the breeze,
Gently playing,
Murmurs, swaying;
Airily, faithfully,
Merrily, cheerily,
Sing thou "Love, Love, Love," all day and all
night.

PRESENT LOVE.

The Christ is far, the Christ is far away.
But thou, my love, art near. Thy fondling hands
I feel, and through the dark see eyes that say :
“My love is here. My love a bulwark stands
Against life’s sorrows stern and loud demands.”
O Love, my soul in answer lifts its voice :
“While love I hold, how should I not rejoice ?
While thee I hold, beneath thy ample sway,
Easy shall be that strait path of my choice,
Although the Christ, the Christ is far away.”

LOVE SONG.

Might I lie at your feet some summer day,
Some summer day, when the sky is blue
And the air is soft,
Gazing aloft,
How should I dream that day away,
Being by you ?

But no. No visions would come, my own,
For I could not dream with you so near.
I should not dream,
But it would seem
That a perfect love is life alone,
In Heaven and here.

A VISION OF LOVE.

Through all the night I looked upon a face
Bent o'er me in a dream without a word ;
Never a flutter nor a breath I heard,
But, ah, the steady eyes were full of grace.

And not mere grace alone spoke from those eyes,
—Or else those eyes have done me grievous
wrong—

A love was there, sweet, tempered like a song
That floods the soul with splendor and surprise.

And all my soul arose, to meet upright
The joy that those can know who taste love's
best ;
And : "Shine," I cried, "till all my soul is
blest,—

Till all my being answers to such light !"

* * * * *

O heart too weak to hold that vision sweet !

O light too white for my unworthy soul !

Elsewhere are hearts that shall contain the
whole ;

Elsewhere are souls shall know that love complete.

IN YOUR MIND.

In your mind (now you will think me fanciful),
In its bright, breezeless, and clarified atmosphere,
Sit I and muse as in a sunlit garden,
Or like a god move blissful to and fro.

Never a day, glance I ever so narrowly,
— Love's sharp eyes scanning the garden's loveliness, —
Walking beneath its sun-translucent foliage,
Never, my love, found I a single weed.

FEAR IN LOVE.

I love thee, yet I fear. Behold I stand
Before a spotless judge. Thy soul I see,
Holding the balance with a steady hand,
That doth not tremble as thou look'st on me.
Before those light-filled eyes of equity,
Before those features, beautiful, austere,
I cannot stand. How feel thy soul so near
And feel myself unstained, pure, clean and
whole?

I love thee, — yea, I love thee, — but I fear.
I fear the comment of thy spotless soul.

IMPOSSIBLE.

If I could lay my head upon your knee
And let the world go by ! Love, could it be ? —
Could we shut out the poor world's muffled tread,
The cry at birth, the wailing for the dead,
All things that tell us of mortality
And love's short life ? — Nay, love, how could it be ?

Out from the Valley of Death, etc.

*Out of my ignorance I made a song
To ease my heart,
And sang it to myself all gleefully,
In a wild wood apart.*

*Out of my knowledge next I made a song,
Made it with pain;
Then sighed and longed that my old ignorance
Might come to me again.*

OUT FROM THE VALLEY OF DEATH.

Out from the valley of Death, O beloved,
Footsore and weary comes trailing thy soul.
Canst thou not tell us the whole
That thou sawest, beloved ?

Nay, naught I saw. A fire in each vein
Did flow and ebb.
Choked was my breath, caught in a tangled web.
I felt my racked, uneasy, restless life
Grow all distorted, dark, and full of pain ;
At forms I did not know, in useless strife
I caught. — But now life is itself again.

And what ? No glimpse of glory through the bar ?
No thread of light ? No voice ? Not one ?

Nay, none.
Only the passion of sense all ajar ;
The dizzy state, fear-wrung,
Of life unstrung.

And in thy palm
No single leaf,
To lay as a balm
To the scar of grief?

Not one. And yet 'tis good to be alive ;
To feel the sunshine filter through the flesh,
The charmed mesh
Of leaves above,
The sky so clear,
And thou so near,
Dear love !
We can but live.
And if we nothing know
'Tis better so.
Can we not let the future rest ?
Is not that faith the only faith confessed
Which says : " We know not ; God, He knoweth
best ? "
O, I could prophesy, dear love, in this.
I know a spirit lurking in thy kiss,
I know a life beneath the swaying leaves
In Heaven's blue, and with no earthly eye
I see a something fairer. There relieves
My senses, dear, a vision. Mystery

Is Life as well as Death, in verity :
This formless, haunting vision surely gives
Me knowledge that a spirit in me lives.
Why mystery to mystery dost strive
To add, love, seeking for a further sign ? —
Out from the valley of Death, O beloved,
Footsore and weary comes trailing my soul,
And I cannot tell thee the whole.
But my soul doth live,
Doth live in thy sight,
In this life's sunlight,
As thine in mine.
Beloved, let this console !

THE SOUL'S SABBATH.

My soul kept Sabbath on a summer day,
Upon a breezy upland far away.

The tenderness of hillsides entered in ;
The patience of grey, mossy-stained, old rocks
That through the grass their wrinkled foreheads
press
Like mighty bulls ; the quaking earth might win
Observance from them by repeated shocks,
But nothing less.

The faithfulness of pine-trees, pointing still
To the great, blue abyss forevermore,
In one long, grand, uplifted, reverent mood ;
The trustfulness of birds who fear no ill
The skies hold for them as they blithely soar,
Seemed in my sight most good.

And so the graciousness of lady elms,
In soft green clothed along their shapely forms ;
The staunchness of old, weather-beaten oaks,

That scorn to bow when winter wind o'erwhelms,
Facing the raging of a thousand storms
In ragged cloaks.

But most the holiness of sailing clouds
Did fill me. These in splendid white all clad
Move on in solemn pomp across the sky,
Like saintly dead in snowy, radiant shrouds,
Passing God's throne in a procession glad
Of joyful mystery.

The whole long luxury of summer's glow
Thus swelled and swelled to perfect peace ;—
and so
My soul kept Sabbath on that summer day
Upon a breezy upland far away.

SEA AND FOREST.

Gently dashing,
Softly plashing,
Myriad-crested,
Milky-breasted
Sea ; —
Thou repeatest
All the music of the ages,
All the wisdom of the sages,
In thy roll ;
And thou greetest
With the fashion
Of thy lapping on the lea,
With the thunder thou art pealing,
Every passion,
Every feeling,
All that rages
In each living human soul.

Mighty forest
On the mountains,

In thy teeming
Life thou storest
All the wonder
Of the race;—
In thy fountains,
In the thunder
Of thy torrent,
In its roaring,
Man finds warrant
For his warring;
In the rustling of thy branches
Finds he chances
For his dreaming,
And sees comfort face to face.

THE SECRET.

O marvel Nature, whisper it to me,
The secret full of haunting mystery!
Shall I not learn, if 'gainst earth's grassy side,
Pulsing with summer's generous-flowing tide,
Flinging me down, I deftly set mine ear?
Shall I not catch it in the melting, clear,
Heart-piercing notes of birds? Or, far from man,
Guess it on sun-bathed slopes, that breezes fan
To coolness? — whence I later may behold
A splendid pageant, blazing red and gold,
Eve's fiery jaws agape to swallow up
The sun, a glowing jewel in a cup
Of molten gold dissolved; then see the moon,
Rocked in her silver boat, set out alone
To voyage across the heavens, one keen star
With loving twinkle watching from afar.
Or when I fling my glance up into trees,
Straight to the topmost boughs in ecstasies,
To catch on myriad leaves the sun of noon's

Green glint? Or lie in denser woods, where
swoons

The sunshine, seeing heaven's own blue entwine
With pointed fingers of the hairy pine?

Shall I not know it then, O Mother sweet,

What time I lie in rapture at thy feet? —

Tell me the meaning of this world I see.

The secret tell, as thou art fair! — Are we

Here but to live, die, sleep, and be forgot?

Ah, marvel Nature, dost thou answer not?

PEACE.

Peace, peace.
But where?
Everywhere.
In the air ;
In torrent's roar,
And brooklet's sweep ;
In things that soar
And things that creep ;
Where flowers bloom,
In desert sand ;
Where pine-trees gloom ;
Where vineyards stand ;
In crowded street,
And wilderness ;
In motions fleet,
And stilliness ;
In sailing clouds
And ocean's green ;
In chilly shrouds,
And bright eyes' sheen ;

In noontide bright,
And darkest night ; —
Peace, peace.
But where ?
Everywhere
To him that reads aright.

HOW SHOULD I SING?

How should I sing?

The poet's voice should silvery be and clear,
Fitted to wing afar or hover near;
To sing the stars, their harmonies of sound,
And then to drop, and throb, and pulse around
The story of some tiny, crawling thing.
How should I sing?

How should I sing?

The poet's eye undimmed and strong should scan
The awful secrets of the soul of man;
See all the glory and the wretchedness,
The deathless soul, the clinging, earthly dress;
Pierce through the cloak men o'er their beings
fling.
How should I sing?

How should I sing?

The poet's ear should catch shrill passion's cry ;
Should hear the sound of death-bed ministry,
The song of triumph, conscience' still, small voice,
Grieving's low moan, and joy's tumultuous noise ;
A chorus sweet and awful in its ring.

How should I sing?

How should I sing?

The poet's soul should bear the race's pain,
Its every joyful heart-beat give again ;
Thrilling respond to each vibrating chord,
To soft low moods and moods that clash discord ;
Feel every pulse ; then rise on tireless wing.
How should I sing?

THE POET TO HUMANITY.

O Eurydice mine, would I could sing
Thy soul from sadness ! In thy piteous Hell
Thou sitt'st, poor, hapless, woful one, the spell
Of some dull passion on thee, and the sting
Sinks to thy heart. Thou hast not strength to
 fling
Thy drooped head up. O love, can this be well ?
Is there no hope ? Can thy poor soul not tell
Some surcease of thy grief ; some better thing ?
O Eurydice, listen to the strain
My harp-strings bring to Hell, that woful place
Where thou sitt'st now with thy pale, haunted
 face ; —
Of nearing hope they sing, of rest from pain,
Of sky, and trees, and stars. — Beloved, bear
No more the torment ! Eurydice, hear !

THE ANSWER.

For my poor self to raise one soothing song,
I pray not, knowing 'tis a prayer unfit.
But for these others. Can I passive sit,
And watch this straining, struggling, hurtling
throng?

O God in Heaven, to make their way less long,
Their load less heavy, give me strength and wit
To sing, to leave some heart with truth peace-
lit,

To strike some blow at foul deceit and wrong!

Sure the petition worth the granting is:

I ask to hurl strong darts, wrong to subdue;

And must the cast still fail? still be amiss?

Back comes the answer, stern, relentless, true:

“When thou thyself hast learned Truth’s lips to
kiss,

Without one swerve, then hope Truth’s work to
do.”

FAILURE.

Set the pale mark of failure on my brow
When I am dead.

Those who have won, the garland's grace may
show,

But not my head.

I never touched achievement, still she fled ;
And what I wrought I did not see or know.

Set the pale mark of failure on my brow,
And let me go.

DAY AND NIGHT.

Surely and swiftly cometh the dawn ;
We cannot lie
Mothered by darkness and loved by the night,
For long, for long ;
For strong, strong,
Uprises from shadowy caverns of slumber the
 morn.
Take the smile laid by
And wear it in daylight's garish sight ;
Go on with the song,
And sing it till fades the evening light ;
The night is the time to rest and sigh.

SINS OF OMISSION.

The deed I should have wrought on yesterday
Did grow and grow, till like a weight it lay
Upon me, though I turned and went my way.

But not to safety ; for around my bed
All the undone will gather ; and like lead
Will on my coffin weigh, when I am dead ;—

And nailing me within with deathly stress,
Will keep from me that sun of righteousness,
That cannot enter through, my sleep to bless.

LIKE TO A BIRD.

Like to a bird with broken wings
Is my soul,
That cannot rise from earthly things
To view the whole.

When it would rise its poor wings trail,
— Alas ! poor soul !—
It sees but one pool and the sedges pale,
Not the whole.

PHAETON.

How often, poor, mad Phaetons, are we cast
By our own rampant thoughts upon the ground ;
Falling from highest Heaven with wild rebound,
Because we cannot hold these coursers fast,
And wring obedience from them. O, at last,
Grant us, high gods, with rayèd glory crowned,
To guide swift-soaring thoughts through heights
 profound
Of clearest ether ! O, no more aghast
May we fall, with hot, blazing hair, and face
All singed, and pallid with the sickening sense
Of helpless impotence, through Heaven's great
 space,
Waiting the coming shock in dread suspense !—
We would be sun-gods, full of light and grace,
Driving in sure control through tracts immense.

COMPENSATION.

Leave the word and spare the blow,
Bow the head ;
Pass from out the sight of those
That are dead.

Let the eye that winks, wink on,
That is all ;
Let the pointed finger point,
It will fall.

As the shuttlecock of time
Comes and goes,
The sweet seasons shall be thine,
And the rose.

JUST BEFORE DARK.

Without, the skeleton trees in a maze
Of leaves, scant, spare and yellowish brown,
That the wind sends down in a sodden rain ;
Below, the river, and there in a blaze,
The sunset flushing like one in pain,
As the torn leaves flutter down.

Within, a woman that lies and sleeps ;—
Better asleep than awake perchance,
With such lines and stains on that upturned face ;
One by the window that weeps and weeps,
Quietly, tears that leave their trace,
Watching the dead leaves dance.

THE LITTLE POET.

Poor little poet,
With voice that will not sing,
And timid, drooping wing
That will not graze the sky,
But o'er the dainty hedgerows
Wheels its tiny ring,
When none are nigh
To see it fly ;
And timid feet that stray
Not far away,
But where the wild-rose blows
Have learned to cling
To slender twigs and sprays,
In narrow, grassy ways,
In nooks where none can spy.
Out of thine eye,
O little poet shy,
Looks deep, full-throated praise.
No need to raise
Thy tiny pipe on high.
Enough for us
That thou look'st thus ;
Thou need'st not sing,
O little poet.

DESTINY.

Thou canst not stand, my child, beside
A glassy pool where cattle drink,
And, gazing on its moveless tide,
Feel thy life-hunger satisfied,
And thy soul bounded by one silver link.

O'er ocean's murmurs must thou brood,
Must breathe the saltness of the sea,
Must loose thy gaze to where the flood,
Feeding the deathless soul in thee,
Smiles itself forth into eternity.

SEPARATION.

And so we go our ways.
The world is wide,
And here with outward sweep our paths divide.
We go our ways.

And for to-morrow ?
There are faces new,
New hands to clasp, new waiting deeds to do ; —
All for to-morrow.

Doth aught remain ?
For me the pangs that live
In separation. But for you who strive
For a white saint-hood, holy joys that thrive
On pain remain.

HABIT.

As inky crows lodge in a snow-clad wood
And smutch its fairness, so black thoughts in
thee.

Shake the ill birds from every snow-bowed tree.

Be pure, by Heaven's grace! Alas! who could?

For these have built their nests, and now they
come,

Will you or will you not, to seek their home:

The snows may come and go,—these will not
flee

THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

Can it be true? — Or did I dream we stood
In that gaunt, dreary room, — we two alone?
Till your locked lips moved, and I heard a moan,
Half-stifled: “Ah, but life is poor and pale;
Something, I know not what, I need, or fail
To bear it onward to its bitter end.”

And this from you, who never will unbend
That head's straight carriage? meet with level
brow,
And steady unmoved eye the world's low bow?
Fulfil, with quiet lip and pliant hands,
The duties one and all, the world demands
Shall be fulfilled, without a question why?

So rich? so dutiful? and yet this cry?
And the calm face turned haggard, pale and set?
Hast thou warm life within thy bosom yet?
Doth something clamor for a wider range?
Long hast thou served, friend. Canst thou hope
to change?
To find another Lord? — Even now? — So late? —

THE SPIRITUALIST.

When winds are high and trees are bare,
And all the fires of life burn low
Within, nor hope nor love is there
Upon the smouldering ash to blow
And raise it to a proper glow ;
Then call I from obscurity
All the sweet souls I e'er did know,
To help in mine extremity.

And forth they start, with faces bright,
As life were throbbing in each vein,
And sweep my hearth and kindle light,
And let me feel their touch again,
And with soft clinging soothe my pain ;
Then sit them down and sweetly gaze
Into my eyes, till I am fain
To give to God His due of praise.

SYMPATHY.

It is as if some tender forest-flower
Should quiver on its slender stem's small thread
At the great war of tree-tops overhead,
Where power of the air seems met with power ;
And, vibrating in passionate sympathy,
Should feel the stress of every storm-tossed,
 groaning tree.

Thou, in thy quiet life, beloved friend,
By draughts unseen of something subtler far
Than that which links my soul to things that are,
Dost feel life's struggles and what these portend.
Far from the battle, in security,
Thou mak'st the strife thine own, intent on
 victory.

CONVENTIONALITIES.

You in your house and I in mine
Can just clasp hands across the way ;
Can just remark if the weather be fine,
As we wish each other a very good day ;
Can note how the puddles shine in the sun,
And how the passers-by splash on.

Then, since the street is narrow and small
And the incidents few are soon o'ertold,
We may draw us back in our houses tall ;
To go outside would be far too bold ;—
To go outside, sweet friend of mine,
And to meet in the street and our arms entwine.

ALONE.

Thou art alone, my sister ? Dost thou guess
The meaning of such loneliness as thine ?
It is as if there towered a lofty pine
Amid a vast and tangled wilderness
Of lesser growth. Aloft 'mid strain and stress
Of weather doth rear its tapering, fine,
And haughty peak. How should, without some
sign,

The shrubs below suspect its loneliness ?
How should they dream of pangs to them unknown
That rend in growth each gently swaying limb ?
And how conceive the strange, insistent moan
Of winds that stir such lofty branches dim ?
Earthward they look ; while full of mystery
And skyward pointing, towers the lofty tree.

But comes there not a time in which the wind
Murmurs all gently, for the pine-tree's own
And ravished hearing ? When for it alone
The clouds their splendid, fleecy locks unbind

And spread them out in air? And though they
find

It ever soaring, while the world lies prone,
'Tis as the monarch is upon his throne,
His solitary griefs with joys combined. —
Alone with winds and clouds, the lesser mould
May not attain thy height; but thou o'er them
Canst bend and whisper. O thou mighty-souled,
Tell them of winds and clouds. Offer thy stem
If they would climb; and find it good to be
That which thou art, O solitary tree.

A BATTLE HE KNOWS NOT.

"A battle he knows not he will confront, an expedition he knows not he will ride to." — THE CHALDEAN ACCOUNT OF GENESIS.
— GEO. SMITH, 1876.

Inertia.

O, fair these studded fields of clover,
Where yellow butterflies make love,
And the sun, like any arrant lover,
Broods over cobwebs last night spun ;
Where the light, and the breeze, and the heat are
at one,
And merrily sail the clouds above ;
And every leaf and blade in the sun,
And the lusty red blossoms, gleam happily.

Animus.

Beyond these fields and far away,
The hills are fair in their garb of grey.

Inertia.

Why wouldst thou travel, O heart of my life ?
Here is happiness close beside thee ;
Yonder, the hills are big with strife ;

Chill and dearth in the hills may betide thee.
Yea, and the veil may hide such a fate,
The clefts in the mountains may be so deep,
The pines so high and the crags so great,
For this life behind may'st thou learn to weep ; —
Life in the valley here with me,
Full of soft security.
The future is great and the Sphinx is fair,
But she sits and looks out over a waste,
High enshrined in some dreary spot ;
And many a gruesome sight is there,
And the cries of dead men move her not.

Animus.

I would strive onward — on and on, .
Though the future were death to look upon ;
Though the fate were the blackest that could be-
fall.
Are there no pleasures a soul may taste
But the pleasures, here, of a beast in the stall,
While it waits and hopes for the next wind-fall ?
In the future is all the joy of speed !
And this is enough ; should I find my rede,
— The scroll of my life that shall tell me all —
And drop ere unfurling it, — good is my fall.

HEAVEN AND HELL.

Shall I seek Heaven that I may find a place
Where with my soul 'tis well ?
If I seek thus, though I may strive for Heaven,
My face is set toward Hell.

DREAMS.

We dream toward morning. Then the busy day
Athwart the marble portals of our sleep
Flings shades that ape her solids. Forms are
they
That buy and sell, chaffer and laugh, or weep.

There is a last awakening. Toward life's end
We dream of Heaven. Then walk through all our
fears
Shapes real and gracious. What should these
portend
That strike such rainbow-triumphs from our tears?

FLESH AND SPIRIT.

Under her casement window grey,
Just at the dawning of the day,
A minstrel, burly, and bold, and gay,
Sings: "Come away, lady, come away!"

O lady, turn to the east thine eyes
And see the hint of a great surprise;
A vast bright sun about to rise
Upon thee. —Wilt thou the hint despise?

O, better the twilight chamber dim,
The walls austere and the couch so trim
And scant of space, than a bed with him,
Who would lure thee out of thy cloister grim,
Just as thy sun is rising.

NECESSITY.

Strong is that angel called Necessity
That strides behind us, and her thong doth cast
Without a taint of pity, first or last.

How should she pity? Sure her great, wide eye
Must mirror, not alone man's present strife,
But all the picture of his future life.

Should she not tearless drive? And yet, to see! —
To know no grim despair is on our track!
To know we should see beauty, looking back!

It may not be. Veiled in dark majesty,
She drives her sheep. God wills it. On we move,
Dogged by this awful shadow of His love.

THEN AND NOW.

Still from their pulpits must we hear them say :

“The Christ on earth and in our midst lives
still ;

The Christ, as God and man, men’s minds, nay
more,

Men’s craving hearts, can fill.”

O painted Christ, with parted, flowing locks,

And mildly rapt, sadly ethereal face,

Still you gaze forth, we meet your mute appeal, —

And praise art’s strength and grace.

O sculptured Christ, with hands spread out to
bless,

O’er the great, splendid, storied church’s door,

You stand still, — but your image you impress

On hearts below no more.

O limned and sculptured Christ, gazing from
niche,

Or looking in sad state from burnished frame,
As men looked on you once, would we could
look —

Look on and feel the same.

* * * * *

But then and now are parted, and He stands

No more enshrined in mystic majesty ;

Only a man plods o'er the dusty roads,

Or listens to thy waves, O Galilee.

AGNOSTICS.

Ye led by hands ye cannot see
To heights ye cannot know,
Who call your God but Destiny,
And say the soul's futurity,
May, or may not, be so, —
Are ye our saints? Are ye the men
To make our Israel whole again?

At least the dear old fables taught
Of hope, and Heaven, and love;
And taught so well that men have wrought
And battled; — for a thing of naught?
Nay, God be judge above!
Within the balance of the Lord,
Their deeds are weightier than your word.

THE USES OF PAIN.

Deep is the anguish and the pain is keen ?

Yea, Lord, 'tis keen.

Deep as the grave, and piercing like a sword ?

Yea, Lord.

And underneath the anguish is there aught ?

Yea, Lord, a thought.

And in this thought is something to atone,

O suffering one ?

Lord, in this thought my spirit learns to rise,

And touch the skies.

In the Slums.

*That life go droning on we learn to ask,
With sunshine on the floor, a cat near by,
A lazy wheel's low stir our only task,
And last soft-fingered twilight drawing nigh,
And shutters closed. Serenely then to lie
And sleep were good.—Thank God it may not be!
The arrogant insistence of the sea
Shall grow less urgent to a listening ear,
Than shall unto our hearts the haunting plea
Of times about us, full of fate and fear.*

TRANSPOSITION.

Transpose the music of thy life, fair soul,
Thy life of varied stop and harmony,
Where peace and love the harsher notes control,
Into a duller, lower, fiercer key.
Half fed and clad, in some dark garret sew
On horny cloth, while, ladened cruelly,
Mutely protesting on the hours go.
Or at remorseless chimes, reluctantly,
Come forth to wheels and cogs. Such music hear
Pale millions, from whose lips strange sounds are
 wrung.
Strive thou to catch it with that dainty ear,
Though it be music thou hast never sung.
See to it well thou hear the strain complete. —
Then marvel! For this music is not sweet!

THE SOLITARY TOILER.

O, just to count for something in this band
Tossing its arms ever the self-same way
To ply its trade ! If one would take my hand,
And look into my eyes but once, and say :
“God speed thee, brother ;” then, perchance, all
night

My pallet were less narrow, less the noise
Above, below, of curses, and more light
My pale, sick, sordid sorrows. O, a voice
To call my burden sore, — acknowledge me,
Who daily grow weak-hearted !—But they pass,
Enwrapped like me in soulless misery,
On, on, and on. — How otherwise ? Alas ! —
And had I strength out of such life to go,
Not one of these, O God ! not one would know !

THE HEART OF THE CHRISTIAN TOWN.

I am held by a thought in a dungeon deep,
Deep under the earth. In a certain town,
Where is traffic, and shout, and roar on the air,
Where the fresh salt wind, that fain would sweep
Straight to the river, is laden down
With all pollution, I saw a pair,
— Pitiful pair — of babies sit,
Back from the street, in a doorway dim,
On a tenement threshold cold and bare,
Stifling each his sobbing fit,
Fearful each lest he cry aloud.
And the thought that holds me fast-bound, down
Under the earth in a dungeon grim,
Is that these two knew the heart of the crowd,
In the very midst of that Christian town.

CONDEMNATION.

False, false, false.

Wealth had ye and your brothers lie in the straw ;
Knowledge had ye and your brothers grope in the
dark ;

Leisure had ye and your brothers are bound to the
wheel ;

O false, false, false !

False, false, false.

Down from your painted couches into the street,
Into the grimy square. In the glare of day,
Shall ye not stoop to reap that ye have sown ?

O false, false, false !

*As some wild sea-gull on his gleaming breast
Might mirror the red splendor of the West,
And with that tiny, fleeting hint of sky
Might fly far inland to a face that's pressed
Against the bars of some old fortress grim;
So, not so fleet, yet faithful still, would I,
With eager wings and strenuous beating, fly,
If that I might bring hints of life's fair best
From the great ocean, to those souls that cry
For life,—from this world's dungeons dark and
dim.*







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